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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to analyze the academic performance of transfers from Virginia community colleges to James Madison University (JMU). In fall 1996, 231 students transferred to JMU from in-state community colleges. The major feeder community colleges were Northern Virginia, Blue Ridge, Lord Fairfax, and Piedmont Virginia. The average first-year GPA of transfers was approximately 2.70, compared to 3.00 for all JMU students. Eighty percent of transfers were on the President's List, the Dean's List or in Good Standing, compared with 91% of all JMU undergraduates. The most popular majors for transfer students were Psychology, History, Computer Information Systems, English, and Sociology. JMU participated in a Course-Based Model of Transfer Success (CBMTS) that compares transfer student and native student performance in courses requiring prerequisites. The disciplines with the highest transfer student GPAs were Elementary Education (3.75), Nutrition (3.57), and Early Childhood Education (3.40). Average GPA for transfer students was below 2.00 in several subjects: Accounting, Biology, Chemistry, Economics, English, Math, and Psychology. With the exception of Chemistry, transfer students majoring in these disciplines had an average GPA above 2.00. Transfer students had an average GPA of below 2.00 in 17 courses, many in disciplines that require a high degree of analytical skills. (RDG)

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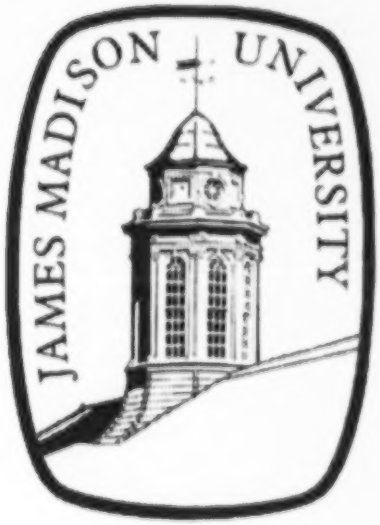
Community College Transfer Performance at JMU



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Community College Transfer Performance at JMU

Fall 1996 Transfers

Introduction

James Madison University has accepted transfer students from the Virginia public two-year colleges for many years. Students have enrolled from the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) since the VCCS colleges opened in the mid-1960s. Typically between 200 and 250 transfer students enroll each fall. Depending on the year, between 50 and 100 enroll during the spring semester. JMU has been committed to accepting VCCS and Richard Bland College transfers because it believes that these students are prepared to be successful at JMU. Occasionally the JMU Office of Institutional Research studies the academic performance of the transfers. These studies have been helpful to JMU's administrative and instructional offices in determining how well these students performed, and how services to these students might be improved.

In 1988 the Office of Institutional Research began sharing academic outcome information on transfers with each two-year college. This effort was instrumental in encouraging all the Virginia four-year public institutions to share similar data. This data sharing effort has enhanced JMU's working relationship with the two-year colleges and created significant positive responses from the colleges.

Although JMU's sharing of data has improved the knowledge of the community colleges about the performance of their students, the data have not been as useful as desired because it was impossible to assess how well transfers performed in specific courses at the senior institutions for which they took the prerequisites at the community college. It is at this level that information was needed to foster meaningful change in instruction at the community colleges that can improve the success of the transfers. As of January 1998 JMU and 13 other Virginia four-year public and private institutions participated in a Course-Based Model of Transfer Success (CBMTS). The purpose of this model, developed by institutional research professionals at Thomas Nelson Community College, is to compare the VCCS transfers' performance in specific disciplines with their performance with native students at four-year institutions. According to the CBMTS Web site at http://www.cnu.edu/cbmts/:

> "Whereas traditional research tracks particular students from the community college to their transfer institution, the CBMTS yields information that shows how well students who complete course prerequisites at a community college perform in specific courses compared to students who complete the prerequisites at the receiving college. The emphasis is on how well courses prepare students. This pinpoints for faculty exactly where students experience difficulty."

This report incorporates the information gained from the CBMTS in the analysis of transfer success at JMU.

The purpose of this report is to summarize the academic performance of the most recent transfer class (Fall 1996) for which comprehensive data exist. The report is designed to address the following research questions:

- How many students transferred from each two-year college in Fall 1996?
- What are the most popular majors for the transfers, and what is the average grade point average (GPA) for students in each major?
- What are the JMU academic standings of the transfers by two-year college, and how do these compare with all JMU undergraduates?
- How well did the transfers perform in each JMU discipline (Accounting, English, etc.), and how did the performance compare with all undergraduates at JMU? In which disciplines did the performance of the transfers, as measured by the CBMTS study, indicate that the transfers' grades were significantly lower than the JMU native students?

- How did the transfers perform in each JMU course? For courses where the average GPA for the transfers was less than or equal to 2.00, what was the average GPA for all undergraduates?

Methodology

The data for this study were gathered from three sources. First, annually data are extracted on academic performance of the two-year college transfers from the JMU student information system. The data include demographic information and course-specific outcomes. These data are shared with the two-year institutions. Second, data for comparing the transfer performance with all JMU undergraduates came from the 1996-97 SCHEV Course Enrollment Data File. The data were analyzed using Microsoft Access© and Excel©. Finally, the results from the CBMTS study were provided by Thomas Nelson Community College.

Results

The results are organized by the guiding research question. Each question is stated again, and is followed by tables and explanation of the results.

- How many students transferred from each two-year college in Fall 1996?

Table 1 shows that 231 students came from the VCCS colleges or Richard Bland College. This represents 43 percent of the transfers who enrolled during Fall 1996. The colleges with the greatest number of transfers were Blue Ridge Community College, Lord Fairfax Community College, Northern Virginia Community College, Piedmont Virginia Community College, and Virginia Western Community College. These have been the primary feeder colleges for many years, and in 1996 accounted for 68 percent of the transfers.

Table 1

Transfers from Virginia's Two-Year Colleges, Fall 1996

COLLEGE NAME	*NUMBER OF STUDENTS*
Blue Ridge	43
Central Virginia	7
Dabney Lancaster	6
Danville	4
Eastern Shore	1
Germanna	8
J Sargeant Reynolds	9
John Tyler	4
Lord Fairfax	34
New River	2
Northern Virginia	53
Patrick Henry	3
Paul D Camp	2
Piedmont Virginia	17
Rappahannock	2
Richard Bland College*	9
Southside Virginia	4
Southwest Virginia	2
Tidewater	9
Virginia Highlands	1
Virginia Western	10
Wytheville	1
Total	231

* All two-year public colleges in Virginia are part of the Virginia Community College System with the exception of Richard Bland College which is affiliated with the College of William and Mary.

- What are the most popular majors for the transfers, and what is the average grade point average (GPA) for students in each major?

Table 2 displays the number of transfer students enrolled in each major, the total hours (taken within the major and outside of the major) attempted during 1996-97, and the average GPA for the students. The GPA is for all courses taken by the students.

Forty different majors were chosen by the transfers. The most popular majors were Psychology, History, Computer Information Systems, English, and Sociology.

The overall GPA for the transfers after the first year was 2.71. The majors with the highest GPAs who had five or more students were Communication Sciences and Disorders (3.25), Health (3.27), and Sociology (3.07). The majors with the lowest GPAs were Hospitality and Tourism Management (1.92), Kinesiology (2.19), Management (2.34), and Computer Information Systems (2.35).

Table 2

Transfer Students by Major, Hours Attempted, and Average GPA

MAJOR	*NUMBER OF STUDENTS*	*HOURS ATTEMPTED*	*GPA*
Accounting	10	270	2.96
Anthropology	2	44	2.57
Art	11	300	2.99
Art History	1	24	3.88
Biology	10	249	2.64
Chemistry	1	26	1.73
Computer Information Systems	14	319	2.35
Computer Science	9	222	2.49
Communication Science and Disorders	10	290	3.25
Dietetics	2	57	2.79
Economics	1	30	2.60
English	12	329	2.80
Finance	9	283	2.45
Geography	2	41	2.07
Geology	4	94	2.12
History	17	473	2.71
Health	5	149	3.27
Hospitality and Tourism Management	6	144	1.92
International Business	2	74	2.84
International Affairs	1	22	2.23
Integrated Science and Technology	4	96	2.98
Kinesiology	6	149	2.19
Mathematics	1	30	3.90
Marketing Education	1	12	3.20
Management	7	190	2.34
Marketing	7	191	2.60
Modern Foreign Languages	2	31	2.13
Music	3	98	2.77
Nursing	2	67	3.04
Philosophy and Religion	2	46	2.52
Physics	1	36	1.94
Political Science	4	55	3.11
Psychology	22	601	2.78
Public Administration	2	52	2.69
Speech Communication	4	129	2.86

MAJOR	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	HOURS ATTEMPTED	GPA
School of Media Arts and Design	7	194	2.78
Sociology	11	282	3.07
Social Work	5	153	2.88
Social Sciences	7	187	2.58
Theatre and Dance	1	5	1.20
Undecided	3	28	2.18
Total	231	6,072	2.71

- What are the JMU academic standings of the transfers by two-year college, and how do these compare with all JMU undergraduates?

Table 3 displays the academic levels of transfers by two-year college. Eighty percent of the transfers were either in Good Standing, on the Dean's List, or the President's List at the end of their first year at JMU. There was some variation among colleges in the percent who had students at or above Good Standing, but the number of students was so small that differences among the colleges are not meaningful. According to the JMU's registrar, 91 percent of all undergraduates were either Good Standing or better.

Table 3

Academic Level at End of First Year at JMU
Fall 1996 Transfers

COLLEGE	PRESIDENT'S LIST	DEAN'S LIST	GOOD STANDING	WARNING	PROBATION	SUSPENSION	TOTAL	PERCENT GOOD STANDING OR ABOVE
Blue Ridge	2		31		7	3	43	78
Central Virginia			7				7	100
Dabney Lancaster			5		1		6	83
Danville		1	3				4	100
Eastern Shore						1	1	0
Germanna			6	1		1	8	75
J Sargeant Reynolds		2	6	1			9	89
John Tyler			2		1	1	4	50
Lord Fairfax	1	1	24		3	5	34	76
New River			2				2	100
Northern Virginia	1	3	39	2	8		53	81
Patrick Henry			3				3	100
Paul D Camp			2				2	100
Piedmont Virginia			15	1	1		17	88
Rappahannock					1	1	2	0
Richard Bland			5	1	3		9	56
Southside Virginia			4				4	100
Southwest Virginia			2				2	100
Tidewater		1	7	1			9	89
Virginia Highlands			1				1	100
Virginia Western			9		1		10	90
Wytheville					1		1	0
Total	4	8	173	7	27	12	231	80

- How well did the transfers perform in each JMU discipline (Accounting, English, etc.), and how did the performance compare with all undergraduates at JMU? In which disciplines did the performance of the transfers, as measured by the CBMTS study, indicate that the transfers' grades were significantly lower than the JMU native students?

Table 4 displays the number of credits taken and the GPA for all courses in each discipline for both the Fall 1996 transfers and all 1996-97 undergraduates. The disciplines with the highest GPAs (10 or more courses) were Elementary Education (3.75), Nutrition (3.57), and Early Childhood Education (3.40). The disciplines with the GPAs below 2.00 (10 or more courses) were Chemistry (1.65), Mathematics (1.71), Accounting (1.85), and Physics (1.95). It is worth noting that the disciplines where many JMU students struggle incorporate significant analytical content, but the fact remains that the GPAs of the transfers are significantly below those of all undergraduates.

The final column of Table 4 displays with an asterisk (*) the disciplines where the percentage of VCCS students receiving a D, F, U, or W grade was statistically different than the JMU native students. The percentage of the VCCS transfers having D, F, U, or W grades was higher than the JMU native students in Accounting, Biology, Chemistry, Economics, English, Math, and Psychology.

A comparison of Table 4 with Table 2 reveals that most transfers majoring in Accounting, Biology, Economics, English, Math, and Psychology were performing well in their majors despite the CBMTS identifying those disciplines as having course preparation concerns. With the exception of Chemistry, students in these majors had an average GPA in courses in their discipline of 2.00 or greater. The average GPA for these majors in courses in their major was 2.71. This finding indicates that the problems associated with course preparation may not be as common for students preparing to major in these disciplines.

Table 4

Credit Hours and GPA by Discipline
Fall 1996 Transfers and All JMU Undergraduates

	ALL STUDENTS		*TRANSFERS*		
DISCIPLINE	*CREDITS*	*GPA*	*CREDITS*	*GPA*	*CBMTS DIFFER-ENCE*
Accounting	7,272	2.64	195	1.85	*
American Studies	204	3.00	3	3.00	
Anthropology	6,350	2.71	150	2.60	
Art	7,888	3.33	204	3.18	
Art History	3,159	3.31	57	3.00	
Arts (Fine Arts)	1,191	3.07	12	3.25	
Bachelor of General Studies	691	3.86	3	2.67	
Biology	13,557	2.64	146	2.37	*
Business Information Systems	6	4.00			
Business Law	3,174	2.91	123	2.27	
Business Education	106	2.86	6	2.50	
Chemistry	6,554	2.60	95	1.65	*
Chinese	223	3.65			
Classics	165	2.85			
College of Business	1,519	2.88	3	4.00	
Computer Science	3,349	3.14	22	2.73	
Communication Science and Disorders	2,635	3.48	110	2.79	
Center for Service Learning	16	2.94	168	3.38	
Dance	1,783	3.45	21	3.52	
Early Childhood Education	1,916	3.69	40	3.40	
Economics	10,792	2.46	204	2.06	*

	ALL STUDENTS		TRANSFERS		
DISCIPLINE	CREDITS	GPA	CREDITS	GPA	CBMTS DIFFERENCE
Education	1,743	3.44	102	2.68	
Elementary Education	747	3.80	36	3.75	
English	22,552	3.20	252	2.74	*
Family Studies	471	3.34	9	3.00	
Finance	5,058	2.99	142	2.39	
Foreign Languages	502	3.36	11	2.64	
French	2,786	3.09	42	2.93	
General Business	1,167	2.99	3	3.00	
Geography	4,329	3.08	70	2.77	
Geology	5,465	2.47	123	2.22	
German	857	2.89	4	2.00	
Gerontology	331	3.61	6	4.00	
Greek	29	2.31			
Graphics	982	3.35	18	3.00	
History	22,073	2.84	438	2.59	
Honors	519	3.71			
Human Resources	267	3.72	6	4.00	
Health	11,227	3.30	175	3.26	
Hotel Tourism Management	1,040	3.21	37	2.54	
International Business	67	3.60			
Information Decision Sciences	12,573	3.07	251	2.62	
Internal Liberal Studies	234	3.47			
Interior Design	479	3.35	39	3.23	
International Affairs	168	2.69			
Integrated Science and Technology	8,784	2.92	83	2.75	
Italian	1,199	3.55	14	3.43	
Kinesiology	7,166	3.51	110	3.35	
Latin	118	2.25	8	1.50	
Liberal Studies	126	3.02	3	4.00	
Library Science	438	3.80	9	3.67	
Mathematics	14,986	2.60	375	1.71	*
Mass Communication	123	3.41			
Management	8,001	3.08	222	2.86	
Marketing	6,307	3.21	123	2.68	
Military Science	995	3.83	12	3.92	
Middle School Education	226	3.92	12	3.83	
Music Appreciation	4,062	3.81	27	3.63	
Music Education	495	3.60			
Music Industry	1,090	3.23	24	2.88	
Music	8,016	2.97	121	2.55	
Nursing	2,525	3.15	35	2.86	
Nutrition	2,391	3.51	63	3.57	
Philosophy	7,514	2.95	114	2.66	
Physics	2,927	2.63	39	1.95	
Political Science	9,895	2.95	161	2.73	
Psychology	19,248	3.06	448	2.74	*
Public Administration	357	3.33	3	3.00	
Reading	173	4.00			
Religion	6,162	3.11	57	2.74	

	ALL STUDENTS		TRANSFERS		
DISCIPLINE	CREDITS	GPA	CREDITS	GPA	CBMTS DIFFER-ENCE
Russian	1,024	3.34	3	4.00	
Speech Communication	12,508	2.91	192	2.81	
Secondary Education	374	3.89	1	4.00	
School Media Arts and Design	6,974	3.05	127	2.61	
Sociology	8,180	3.00	243	3.05	
Social Sciences	201	2.61	9	1.67	
Social Work	2,509	3.27	66	2.95	
Spanish	4,574	3.12	48	2.75	
Special Education	1,674	3.68	81	3.14	
Theatre	2,315	3.29	21	3.14	
University Math and Science	1,551	2.61	6	2.50	
Vocational Education	3	4.00			
Women's Studies	171	3.67			
Total	323,598	3.01	6,186	2.67	

- How did the transfers perform in each JMU course? For courses where the average GPA for the transfers was less than or equal to 2.00, what was the average GPA for all undergraduates?

The final analysis is of transfer performance in specific courses as compared with all JMU students. Table 5 displays the comparisons as well as the courses identified in the CBMTS as being courses where the transfer performance was weaker than the JMU native students. In 17 courses the transfer GPA was 2.00 or less. Many of these courses were in disciplines identified in the CBMTS study. Five of the courses were identified as courses where transfers between 1993-94 and 1996-97 had higher percentages of D,F,U, or W grades. In 1996-97 the differences in these courses identified by CBMTS were small. It is again worth noting that the courses in which the transfers experienced difficulties require significant analytic skills.

Table 5

Transfer and All Students GPA by Course
1996-97

COURSE	COURSE NUMBER	CREDITS	GPA	ALL STUDENTS	CBMTS DIFFERENCE
ACTG	241	84	1.11	2.49	
ACTG	242	33	1.64	2.67	
ACTG	343	27	2.33	2.34	*
ACTG	344	15	3.20	2.52	
ACTG	377	24	2.88	2.78	
ANTH	195	63	2.24	2.50	
ANTH	197	15	3.20	2.85	
ANTH	236	15	2.60	2.78	
ANTH	355	15	3.00	3.01	
ART	140	24	3.13	3.43	
ART	160	27	3.33	3.39	
ART	200	72	3.04	3.20	
ART	240	24	3.25	3.29	
ART	260	18	3.17	3.44	
ARTH	201	18	2.00	3.24	
BIO	101	15	1.80	2.49	
BIO	120	20	2.60	2.53	
BIO	130	24	3.17	2.40	
BIO	220	15	2.60	2.50	*

COURSE	COURSE NUMBER	CREDITS	GPA	ALL STUDENTS	CBMTS DIFFERENCE
BIO	290	24	1.50	2.36	
BLAW	218	114	2.21	2.84	
CHEM	131	21	1.00	2.54	
CHEM	341	27	1.56	2.38	
CHEM	342	18	1.33	2.27	
CS	138	16	3.25	3.06	
CS	139	16	2.75	3.03	
CS	348	15	3.60	3.63	
CSD	200	24	3.63	3.53	
CSD	207	21	3.43	3.60	
CSD	208	21	2.86	3.17	
CSD	209	21	3.14	3.38	
CSD	300	27	3.78	3.81	
CSD	301	15	3.40	3.43	
CSD	420	15	3.40	3.60	
ECED	401A	15	3.20	3.73	
ECON	201	93	1.97	2.38	
ECON	202	48	2.13	2.40	
ECON	225	39	2.46	2.45	
EDUC	360	81	2.44	3.29	
EDUC	370	18	3.50	3.90	
ENG	102	27	2.89	3.17	
ENG	235	27	3.22	3.10	
ENG	236	18	2.83	3.11	
ENG	248	15	2.40	3.18	
ENG	398	15	2.60	3.42	
FIN	210	18	2.67	3.23	
FIN	345	84	2.29	2.74	
FIN	360	24	2.63	2.96	
FR	231	15	3.00	3.23	
GEOG	120	27	3.33	3.08	
GEOL	100	48	2.44	2.33	
GEOL	211	18	2.00	2.42	
HIST	101	63	2.29	2.78	
HIST	102	132	2.59	2.76	
HIST	233	21	2.14	2.73	
HIST	263	15	2.40	3.03	
HIST	270	21	2.86	2.85	
HIST	320	15	2.60	2.72	
HIST	321	15	2.80	3.03	
HIST	395	24	2.63	3.00	
HTH	100	42	2.86	3.01	
HTH	354	21	3.71	3.61	
HTH	372	15	3.00	3.13	
IDS	191	39	1.62	2.60	
IDS	204	32	2.94	3.26	
IDS	291	77	2.34	2.77	
IDS	304	24	2.75	3.10	
IDS	324	21	2.86	3.14	
IDS	344	15	2.80	3.31	
IDS	360	21	3.14	2.70	

COURSE	COURSE NUMBER	CREDITS	GPA	ALL STUDENTS	CBMTS DIFFERENCE
ISAT	111	21	3.00	3.17	
ISAT	141	18	2.17	2.63	
KIN	303	15	2.60	2.69	
MATH	103	39	1.77	2.70	
MATH	107	24	2.00	2.45	
MATH	205	108	1.47	2.70	
MATH	206	27	1.44	2.90	
MATH	220	126	1.67	2.44	
MGT	300	123	2.88	3.07	
MGT	311	72	2.88	3.09	
MGT	365	15	2.40	2.76	
MKTG	380	108	2.61	2.91	
MUI	221	18	3.00	2.99	
MUS	200	48	2.50	3.01	
MUS	203	21	2.86	2.76	
NUTR	280	36	3.67	3.39	
PHIL	101	48	2.81	3.01	
PHIL	250	24	2.25	2.81	
POSC	110	18	2.33	3.06	
POSC	215	20	3.40	2.97	
POSC	225	48	2.50	2.69	
PSYC	101	36	2.83	2.81	
PSYC	160	126	2.79	3.03	
PSYC	210	100	2.72	3.06	
PSYC	211	52	2.62	3.04	
PSYC	308	15	2.60	2.74	
PSYC	335	15	1.80	3.05	
PSYC	365	24	3.13	3.35	
REL	101	45	2.80	3.15	
SCOM	120	27	2.89	2.55	
SCOM	121	60	2.55	2.92	
SCOM	260	18	2.50	2.61	
SMAD	200	18	2.50	2.81	
SMAD	210	24	2.67	2.88	
SMAD	300	18	2.00	2.63	
SOCI	101	45	2.73	2.86	
SOCI	102	15	2.80	3.04	
SOCI	214	15	2.20	2.47	
SOCI	240	15	3.40	3.00	
SOCI	276	21	3.14	3.13	
SOCI	325	15	2.60	2.65	
SOCI	331	18	3.00	3.10	
SOCI	384	15	3.80	2.98	
SOWK	288	15	3.00	3.11	
SPED	200	48	3.19	3.73	

Summary

James Madison University has been accepting transfer students from the Virginia public four-year institutions for more than 30 years. Between 200 and 250 students from these institutions transfer to JMU each fall semester. The purpose of this study was to analyze and summarize the academic performance of the transfers.

In Fall 1996 231 students transferred to JMU from the two-year institutions. This represented 43 percent of the Fall 1996 transfers. The major feeder colleges were Northern Virginia Community College, Blue Ridge Community College, Lord Fairfax Community College, and Piedmont Virginia Community College. These have been the major feeder colleges for many years.

The academic performance of most transfers was generally acceptable, with the average GPA being approximately 2.70 during their first year at JMU. This compares with an average GPA of approximately 3.00 for all JMU students. Eighty percent of the transfers were on the President's List, Dean's List, or in Good Standing. This compares with 91 percent of all JMU undergraduates.

JMU and 13 other Virginia four-year public and private institutions participated in a Course-Based Model of Transfer Success (CBMTS). According to their Web site at Thomas Nelson Community College, the "CBMTS yields information that shows how well students who complete course prerequisites at a community college perform in specific courses compared to students who complete the prerequisites at the receiving college." The data for JMU and the transfers indicated that the transfers' performance in several disciplines was lower than JMU native students. The disciplines were Accounting, Biology, Chemistry, Economics, English, Math, and Psychology. While there appear to be course preparation issues for the transfers in these disciplines, a close examination of the data indicates that the problems associated with course preparation may not be as common for students preparing to major in these disciplines.

It is important to identify specific courses where the overall performance of transfers may not be acceptable. In 17 courses the transfer GPA was 2.00 or less. Many of these courses were in disciplines identified in the CBMTS study. It is interesting that success in virtually all these courses depends upon a high degree of analytical skills.

It is hoped that this report and the CBMTS data will provide useful information to the VCCS colleges and JMU about the areas where the transfers may not be receiving sufficient preparation at the VCCS college. The CBMTS results were shared with the JMU colleges and the VCCS colleges in Spring 1998.

The college transfer program for Virginia's two-year public colleges continues to be a viable alternative for students who desire a bachelor's degree from JMU. However, the colleges must take action to increase the likelihood that the transfers will gain sufficient analytical competencies to be successful at JMU.

Additional questions about this study should be directed to the JMU Office of Institutional Research.